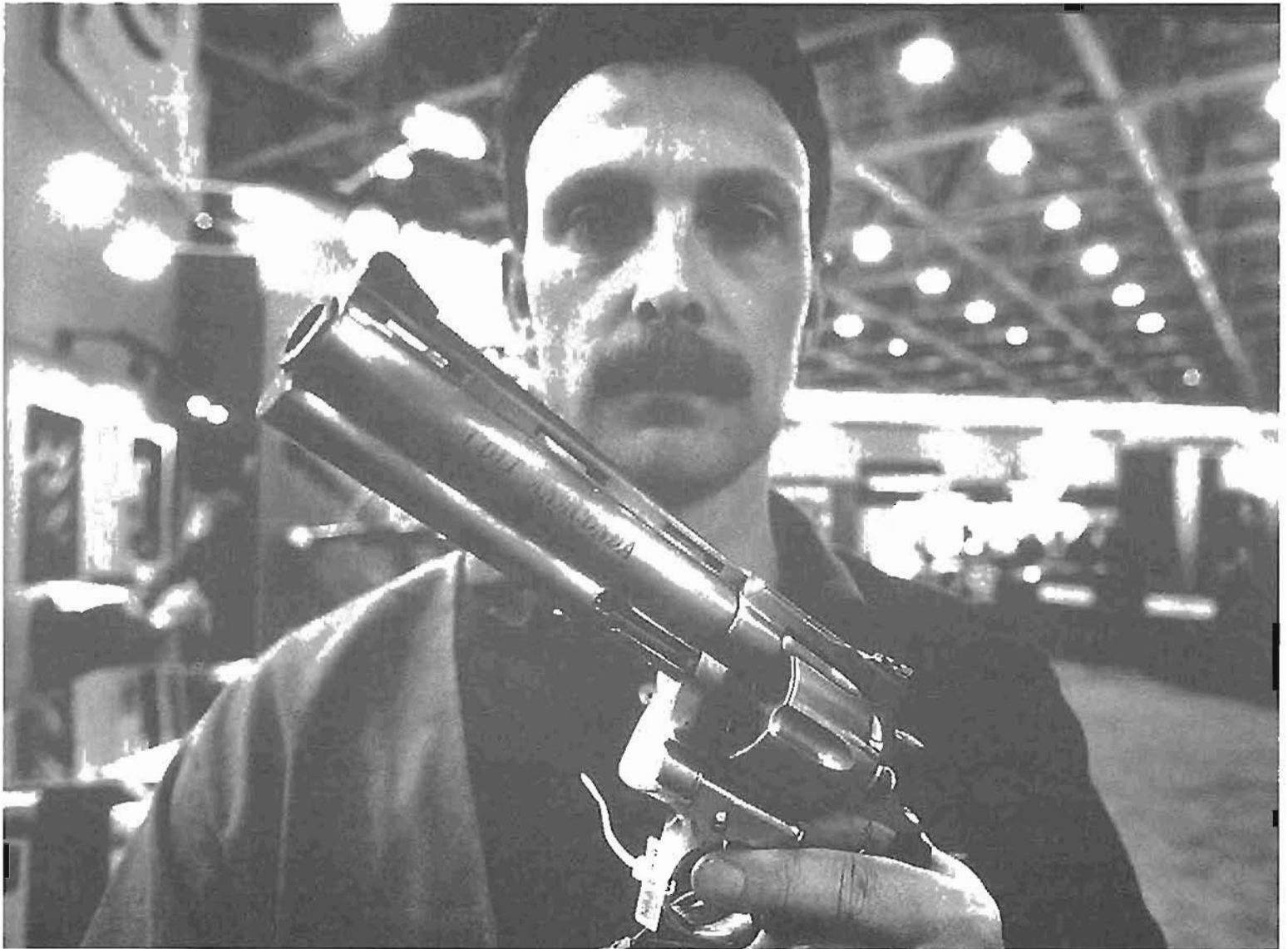


# THE Round Table

Fall/Winter  
1999

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

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## Gun Nation



# Why This Issue?

"This is a peace gun," my four year old son announces to me with a glint of amusement in his eyes. He is holding up a structure he fashioned using Legos. The purpose of his comment, I know, is to deflect the almost certain disapproval he expects from me for playing with a gun. Maybe I will let him play with it if it is a "peace" gun. We absorb our culture so early and so quickly learn to try to manipulate what is bad into something good. I have been amazed at the deep-rootedness of our gun culture. Many of my friends have experienced the same tenacity with which our children insist upon playing with guns. All of these children are sheltered from violent TV shows; indeed, my son barely watches TV at all. Perhaps it is pre-school age rebelliousness or the need to develop a separate identity, perhaps it is somehow a function of (more often but not exclusively) male hormones. I don't know; nor do I care. I am simply saddened to see this lethal and evil aspect of our culture reflected in child's play.

This issue was inspired, in large part, by the photo exhibit, "Gun Nation." In this exhibit British photographer Zed Nelson captured just this deep-rootedness and pervasiveness of guns in our culture. His photos range from that of a young father in combat fatigues and tee shirt whose gun in one hand provides a cold counter-point to the sweet face of his baby held by the other to shot-up bodies zippered into bags at the morgue. As Nelson relates in his article, he came to the U.S. to observe and document "a nation's obsession with firearms." His exhibit was shown at a photojournalism gallery in Manhattan, New York, and in Arlington, Virginia. In addition to Nelson's article, we have included many of his photographs both throughout the issue and in our centerfold.

We have also turned to a classic piece to complement the contemporary work of Nelson's. We open our issue with Daniel Berrigan's 1978 letter to Ernesto Cardenal of Nicaragua, entitled, "Guns Don't Work." Although his letter is about a use of arms different from the focus of this issue, his analysis of weapons in light of the gospel of Jesus is a relevant and eloquent statement. Indeed, Nelson's photos document Berrigan's words that our culture consists of "an uneasy mix of gunmen, gun makers, gun hucksters, gun researchers, gun runners. . . ." et al. It remains true, we believe with Berrigan, that guns will not bring on the reign of God.

Carol Giles turns our attention to what happens after the gun shot—both to the victim immediately and later in the hospital. Susan Alan of the Economic Conversion Project writes about our country's vast role in arming the world through foreign arms sales. Mira Tanna's interview with Colombian peace activist Cecilia Zarate-Laun shows us the consequences of our arms sales for one of the recipients of our ghastly export.

We conclude with our regular features. And we do pray, as Jesus taught us, for the coming of his kingdom, a kingdom perhaps where Lego guns will be turned into Lego plowshares.



--Ellen Rehg

Front cover and centerfold photos by Zed Nelson  
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# Guns Don't Work

by Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

*Ernesto Cardenal had helped establish a Christian community on Solentiname Island in Nicaragua. Some members joined the armed resistance to Somoza, and Cardenal issued a declaration of his support for them and the Sandinista Front. Daniel Berrigan wrote the following open letter to Cardenal, published in the National Catholic Reporter on May 5, 1978.*

Dear Brother Ernesto Cardenal,

Your account of events in your community of Solentiname has been widely distributed in the United States, especially by the religious press. One translation appended a word: "It is important for us in this country to be able to listen and not to judge this."

Indeed. But at least we can talk together. Please consider what follows, then, as a continuing reflection on matters you have had the courage to open up, and indeed, to act on.

May I also summon a memory or two, as you do so poignantly in your statement? You visited my brother Philip and myself in jail in February of 1977, when we were locked up after a demonstration at the Pentagon. I hope you could read in our faces all your visit meant; a visit from a fellow priest, a poet, a good communitarian, a struggling friend, whose fame was great but whose human warmth was his best gift. Thank you once more for coming to us.

Then there was our first meeting a few years previous, when you brought the art of Solentiname to New York for an exhibition. I had the joy of greeting you, this poet, the intense quiet Latino, known in the southern countries for his sandals and flowing hair and beard, his kindly myopic eyes; known here for his poetry, his courage.

The shadow of Thomas Merton's death lay heavy

on us. I think we were seeking consolation in one another's eyes. And we found it.

I am not going to start with the customary disclaimers about your statement. Such are not only superfluous, they verge on the insulting. What Latino, what Yankee doesn't know by now the deadly mutual interests which in Washington prop up the Nicaraguan military government of the Somozas? And who would regard you, an exile, a priest who must now anoint your forehead with the ashes of your dream--regard your convictions, your choices, with anything but the utmost respect? All this is implicit in friendship itself.

I would like to do you a better courtesy, that of taking you seriously: your words, and the actions which by now, I presume, you have taken.

Let me say too that the questions you raise are among the most crucial that Christians can spell out today. Indeed, in your own country, your life raises them. But you thrust them also at us, and rightly so. They are far more than a matter of domestic importance.

There is, first of all, no parallel in America to the violence you describe whether of the Somozas or the Sandinistas.

What indeed are a few guns, or even a few hundred guns, in the hands of guerrillas in comparison with the doomsday cache of nuclear horrors lurking in our mountains and bunkers? What reasonable comparison can be made between the sorties of your Frente Sandinista, and the lunar devastation of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia? On your part, a few deaths, much love, exalted goals. On the part of America--but words fail me.

These things I grant with all my heart. What then nags at me, when I ponder your words? I have some inkling of what you face, what your companions face, the students and workers and peasants of your country. I know

that the Somozas, given the leash, could swallow all of you tomorrow. I know that on the same day, the U.S. military could swallow the Somozas who had swallowed you--the mouse within the dog within the python--and hardly feel sated. On the world scale where the stakes are piled high--oil, uranium, laissez-faire larcenies, predatory markets, rip-offs and standoffs; in a world where the superpowers warily circle one another like urban thugs, nuclear firebombs in hand; in such a world, you or your followers, or even your persecutors, count for very little.

You and the Frente, and the Somozas, could disappear tomorrow. Only a minor breeze would stir the papers on the desk of some sub-secretariat of the State Department. A lie or two at a presidential press conference would be your obituary, the Nicaraguan folder transferred to a dead file. The empire, in sum, can take your life, and take your death, and take your theology, and the destruction of your community, and your resistance, all in stride.

I say this in no spirit of cynicism. Merely to suggest that in a way I find both strange and exhilarating, your situation lies quite near the realities of the gospel. It ought not, after all, depress us beyond measure, if the empire finds you and me expendable. That is quite normal and constant in the history of such entities. What is of import finally is whether we are able to salvage something in the open season on humans.

I do not mean salvage our lives; I mean our humanity. Our sense of one another, of compassion--our very sanity.

I hope I am inching toward the contents of your letter. You discuss quite freely and approvingly the violence of a violated people, yourselves. You align yourself with that violence, regretfully but firmly, irrevocably.

I am sobered and saddened by this. I think of the consequences of your choice, within Nicaragua and far beyond. I sense how the web of violence spins another thread, draws you in, and so many others for whom your example is primary, who do not think for themselves, judging that a priest and poet will lead them in the true way.

I think how fatally easy it is, in a world demented and enchanted with the myth of short cuts and definitive solutions, when nonviolence appears increasingly naive, old hat, freakish--how easy it is to cross over, to seize the gun. How easy to conclude: the deck is stacked, first card to last, in favor of the Big Sharks; the outcome of the game, of life itself, is settled before the cards are dealt. Why then isn't taking a few lives (of dubious value at best, torturers, lackeys, police) preferable to the taking of many lives of great value, students, the poor, the victimized and defenseless, the conscientious, those easily identifiable as gospel brothers and sisters? There is, after all, a long tradition of legitimate self-defense.

It may be true, as you say, that "Gandhi would agree with us." Or it may not be true. It may be true, as you imply, that Merton would agree with you. It may be true that Christ would agree with you. I do not believe he would, but I am willing to concede your argument, for the sake of argument.

You may be correct in reporting that "those young Christians fought without hate. . . and especially without hate for the guards" they shortly killed (though this must be cold comfort to the dead). Your vision may one day be verified of a Nicaragua free of "campesino guards killing other campesinos. . . ." The utopia you ache for may one day be realized in Nicaragua: "... an abundance of schools, child care centers, hospitals and clinics for everyone. . . and most importantly, love between everyone." This may all be true; the guns may bring on the kingdom.

But I do not believe it.

One religious paper here published your words under the following headline: "When they take up arms for love of the kingdom of God." How sublime, I thought, how ironic. We have had "just" wars of the Right, a long history of blood, the blood of colonials and natives and slaves and workers and peasants. But we are through with all that. Now we are enlightened. We are to have "just" wars of the Left!

So the young men of Solentiname resolved to take up arms. They did it for one reason: "on account of their love for the kingdom of God." Now here we certainly speak within a tradition! In every crusade that ever marched across Christendom, murder--the most secular of undertakings, the most worldly, the one that enlists and rewards us along with the other enlistees of Caesar--this undertaking is invariably baptized in religious ideology: the kingdom of God.

The power of such language we know too well. Religious battle cries induct hearts and minds as no secular slogans can. Religious ideology raises its flag in every nation, even as it denies the final authority of every nation. It offers to transcendent longings a task that is simple and forthright: kill. It offers a slogan that is as immediately tactile and hot as a fired gun: kill for the kingdom. And perhaps most important of all, it offers a way out: out of anger, out of frustration, out of poverty, out of political stagnation, out of the harsh and dreadful necessity of love. God wills it! The kingdom requires it!



Kate O'Rourke

Blood and iron, nukes and rifles. The leftists kill the rightists, the rightists kill the leftists, both, given time and occasion, kill the children, the aged, the ill, the suspects. Given time and occasion, both torture prisoners. Always, you understand, inadvertently, regretfully. Both sides, moreover, have excellent intentions, and call on God to witness them. And some god or other does witness them, if we can take the word of whatever bewitched church.

And of course nothing changes. Nothing changes in Beirut, in Belfast, or in Galilee, as I have seen. Except that the living die. And that old, revered distinction between combatant and noncombatant, which was supposed to protect the innocent and helpless, goes down the nearest drain; along with the indistinguishable blood of any and all.

Alas, I have never seen anyone morally improved by killing; neither the one who aimed the bullet, nor the one who received it in his or her flesh.

Of course we have choices, of course we must decide. When all is said, we find that the gospel makes sense, that it strikes against our motives and actions or it does not. Can that word make sense at all today, can it be something more than utopian or extravagant? The gospel is after all a document out of a simpler age, a different culture. It may even be our duty to construct for ourselves another ethic, based on our own impasse or insights or ego. And go from there, with whatever assurance we can muster, amid the encircling gloom.

Or on the other hand, we can bow our heads before a few truths, crude, exigent, obscure as they are. The outcome of obedience we cannot know, the outcome of disobedience we can deceive ourselves about, indefinitely and sweetly. Thou shalt not kill. Love one another as I have loved you. If your enemy strike you on the right cheek, turn to him [or her] the other. Practically everyone in the world, citizens and believers alike, consign such words to the images on church walls, or the embroideries in front parlors.

We really are stuck. Christians are stuck with this Christ, the impossible, unteachable, irreformable loser. Revolutionaries must correct him, set him aright. That absurd form, shivering under the crosswinds of power, must be made acceptable, relevant. So a gun is painted in his empty hands. Now he is human! Now he is like us.

Does it all have a familiar ring? In the old empires, the ragged rabbi must be cleaned up, invested in Byzantine robes of state, raised in glittering splendor to the dome of heaven. Correction! correction! we cry to those ignorant gospel scribes, Matthew and the rest. He was not like that, he was not helpless, he was not gentle, he was under no one's heel, no one pushed him around! He would have taken up a gun if one had been at hand, he would have taken up arms, "solely for one reason; on account of his love for the kingdom of God." Did he not have fantasies like ours, in hours out of the public glare, when he too itched for the quick solution, his eyes narrowed like gun sights?

How tricky it all gets! We look around at our cul-

ture: an uneasy mix of gunmen, gun makers, gun hucksters, gun researchers, gun runners, guards with guns, property owners with guns. A culture in which the guns put out contracts on the people, the guns own the people, the guns buy and sell the people, the guns practice targets on the people, the guns kill the people. The guns are our second nature, and the first nature is all but obliterated; it is gunned down.

And who will raise it up, that corpse with the neat hole in its temple, ourselves? It is impossible, it is against nature.

Christ asks the literally impossible. And then, our radical helplessness confessed, he confers what was impossible.

Dear brother Ernesto, when I was underground in 1970 with J. Edgar Hoover's hounds on my tail, I had long hours to think of these things. At that time I wrote: "The death of a single human is too heavy a price to pay for the vindication of any principle, however sacred." I should add that at the time, many among the anti-war Left were playing around with bombings, in disarray and despair.

I am grateful that I wrote those words. I find no reason eight years later to amend or deny them. Indeed, in this bloody century, religion has little to offer, little that is not contaminated or broken or in bad faith. But one thing we have: our refusal to take up bombs or guns, aimed at the flesh of brothers and sisters, whom we persist in defining as such, refusing the enmities pushed at us by war-making state or war-blessing church.

This is a long loneliness, and a thankless one. One says "no" when every ache of the heart would say "yes." We, too, long for a community on the land, heartening liturgies, our own turf, the arts, a place where sane ecology can heal us. And the big boot comes down. It destroys everything we have built. And we recoil. Perhaps in shock, perhaps in a change of heart, we begin to savor on our tongues a language that is current all around us: phrases like "legitimate violence," "limited retaliation," "killing for love of the kingdom." And the phrases make sense--we have crossed over. We are now an army, like the pope's army, or Luther's, or the crusaders, or the Muslims. We have disappeared into this world, into bloody, secular history. We cannot adroitly handle both gospel and gun; so we drop the gospel, an impediment in any case.

And our weapons?

They are contaminated in what they do, and condemned in what they cannot do. There is blood on them, as on our hands. And like our hands, they cannot heal injustice or succor the homeless.

How can they signal the advent of the kingdom of God? How can we, who hold them? We announce only another bloody victory for the emperor of necessity, whose name in the Bible is Death.

Shall he have dominion?

Brother, I think of you so often. And pray with you. And hope against hope.

Daniel



# Gun Nation

by Zed Nelson

Four years ago a man entered a British junior school and shot sixteen children and their teacher to death. The "Dunblane massacre" triggered a fierce backlash against guns and calls for all privately-owned firearms to be banned outright in the United Kingdom.

Arguments for and against guns raged in Britain, fueled by a small minority of pro-gun advocates who suggested it was unfair to them to outlaw their firearms. But what about the right of a majority to live in a gun-free society? Frustrated by the notion that Britain might not seize the opportunity to swiftly contain a potential Pandora's Box, I turned my focus on the United States — a country that has historically embraced and celebrated gun ownership, where nearly 40% of all households reportedly keep a gun.

Since 1960, over half a million people have been shot to death in the streets and homes of the United States. By no coincidence, there are an estimated 240 million guns currently in circulation nationwide. The solution seemed clear: get rid of the guns. Armed with this notion, I arrived at the National Rifle Association's (NRA) 125th annual convention in Dallas on April 9, 1996, and unwittingly stepped into a hornet's nest. "Guns don't kill people — people kill people" was the mantra I heard repeatedly from gun supporters who always added, "A gun is an inanimate object."

In the first year of my investigation into American gun culture, over 34,000 people were shot to death with inanimate objects. A sizable number of vocal Americans appear so passionately in favor of guns that they admit no link between the widespread proliferation and easy availability of firearms and the huge annual death toll. I have struggled to understand both sides of the debate. Gun owners cannot be easily classified, they come from all walks of life. Many owners purchase guns as protection

from a strongly perceived threat, as well as believing it is their right. A group of armed Memphis housewives told me, "If you ban guns, the bad guys will still have them," and a father holding a gun in one hand and his baby girl in the other, voiced a widely held belief when he said, "It's my constitutional right to own a gun, to protect myself and my family."

While this rationale does not, on the surface, seem unreasonable, evidence suggests that the bad guys tend to steal their guns from the good guys (or just buy them second-hand), and that protecting one's family becomes increasingly difficult when teen-agers can legally purchase semi-automatic assault weapons through classified ads and at local gun-shows, and children often get their hands on their fathers' guns. What is striking about the gun debate is how polarized the two opposing sides are; there is no middle ground, no compromise.

In the past 24 months, a series of fatal school shooting rampages, committed by students armed with a variety of firearms, has shaken the nation. In the wake of the worst school shooting spree in American history — the Columbine High School massacre — a local Colorado Congressman bizarrely announced, "Now is not the time to debate gun control," while a Denver newspaper columnist wrote, "There is something profoundly distasteful about debating gun policy... in the context of such a tragedy." As I stood next to the fresh graves of fourteen Columbine High School students, it was hard not to feel bewildered by such comments. Reverend Lucia Guzman, a Denver church leader and rare voice of wisdom, was one of the very few local public figures to actually speak out in favor of gun debate, saying, "If not here... where? And if not now... when?"

After two years of documenting a nation's obsession with firearms, this latest atrocity struck me as a po-

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Zed Nelson is an English photographer whose work is featured in this issue.

tential catalyst to end America's enduring love affair with the gun. Surely the time had come when the weight of public opinion would say, "Enough. . . ."

But the full scale of America's Catch-22 could be seen in Denver on Saturday May 1st, 1999, when, just days after the Columbine School shootings, the NRA's annual meeting took place in the very same city. This, combined with suggestions from local and national commentators that tragedies like Columbine could be prevented if teachers were armed, goes to show how complicated the gun debate actually is.

In the days after the school shooting rampage that left fourteen students and a teacher dead and 22 more hospitalized, I encountered little change in attitudes towards guns. Local gunshops opened for business as usual, and every possible scapegoat, from the Internet to the Devil himself, was being blamed for this most recent addition to the grim catalogue of gun-related deaths in America.

On June 17, in the aftermath of Columbine, the House of Representatives passed a "juvenile crime bill," steadfast in its refusal to limit the ease with which juveniles can lay their hands on firearms. House Republicans, it was clear, were determined to avoid making any connection between the fact that there are an estimated 240 million guns in the United States — a number that is increasing by some five to seven million a year — and the increase of violence in American culture. Instead, the problem was that we had forgotten the importance of "family values." Guns weren't the problem; the problem was "the abandonment of God" in the public sphere, or the entertainment industry.

So what can be done about the gun problem in America? Or more importantly, what will be done? There is a block to the solution, both psychological and legal. It's called the Second Amendment. The truth about the Second Amendment is something that liberals cannot bear to admit: the right-wing is right. The amendment does perhaps confer an individual right to bear arms, and its very presence makes gun control very difficult.

With crazed day traders and resentful adolescents mowing down large numbers of their fellow citizens every few weeks, the Second Amendment is beginning to look like an outdated obstacle to any kind of modern solution, and maybe even an encouragement to the problem.

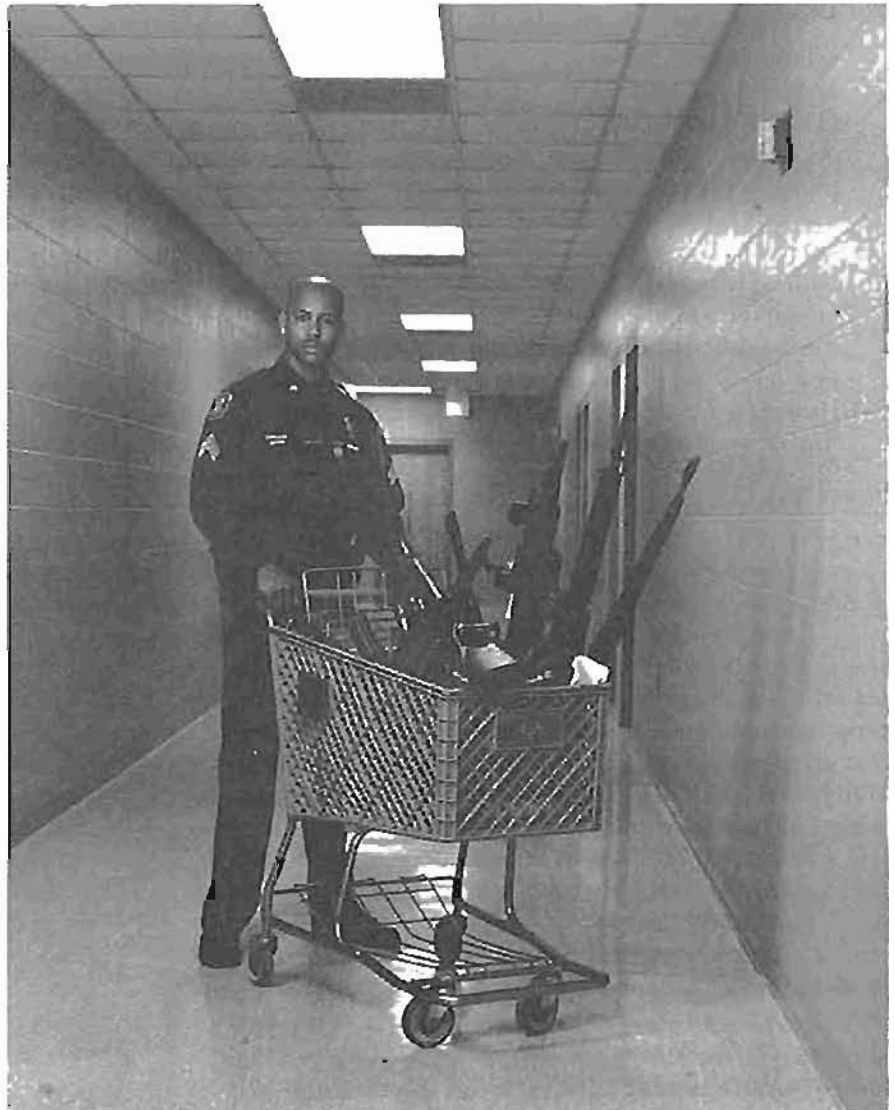
Could it be that the Constitution is not the greatest plan on earth? That it contains elements that are out-of-key with a modern, overpopulated society? Daniel Lazare is the author of *The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy*. He has written expertly on the subject of guns in America, and I can find no better words than his: "Because

we have chained ourselves to a premodern Constitution, we are unable to deal with the modern problem of a run-away gun culture in a modern way. . . . Each new crazed gunman is a symptom of our collective — one might say our Constitutional — helplessness. Someday soon we will have to emancipate ourselves from our eighteenth-century Constitution. The only question is how."

Over and again I heard the guns-for-all justification: "It's our Constitutional right." But that somehow seems irrelevant and hollow-sounding when ordinary people are being gunned down by a series of heavily armed maniacs who, inexplicably, seem to originate from "normal" middle-class, previously law-abiding backgrounds.

With the exception of Luxembourg, Norway, and Great Britain, there is not one industrialized country that has not thoroughly revamped its constitution since 1900. If they can do it, why can't we?

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# Gunshots: What Really Happens

by Carol Giles

During the night, a 29-year-old man was brought to the ER with a gunshot wound to the abdomen. The ER staff poured blood into him as fast as the lab could get it ready. Platelets, plasma and blood. Unit after unit. His youth and the suspicious caliber and path of the bullets were all that kept him alive as he was rushed to the operating room. The surgeon traced the trajectory of the bullets, removed a kidney, handfuls of liver, the omentum, a segment of colon, several bullet fragments, and tissue from entry and exit wounds. All in a day's work, the surgeon murmured. . . — Laurence J. Purdy, M.D. in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, January 26, 1990, Volume 263, Number 4, p. 523.

The above-quoted scene is tragically repeated every day and night in hospital emergency and operating rooms throughout the United States. The reality is rarely portrayed on television, video or movie screens. In the past, if a television crime drama protagonist was shot, it was often in the shoulder; and he was up and around with his arm in a sling after the commercial. More recently, programs such as *Chicago Hope* and *ER* present some of the grittier side of gun violence, but they are still Hollywood's version of emergency medicine. At the extreme end of the spectrum, movies such as *Lethal Weapon* and *Terminator* have led us to expect blood-spattering violence, so much so that we become numb to it and dismiss it.

If gunshot victims make it to the emergency room in real life, they are more likely to face the scene quoted in the beginning of this piece. Becky Hassler, of the Karen House Catholic Worker Community in St. Louis, was a registered nurse in the emergency room of the former St.

Louis Regional Hospital for approximately seven years. Of necessity, she noted, the focus was on care of the patient. The order of events was to determine: 1) Where was the gunshot wound? 2) Was there an exit wound? 3) If there was no exit wound, x-rays would be taken to see where the bullet had gone in the person's body and what damage it had done. If possible, surgery was performed to remove the bullet(s). A shot to the stomach or kidney might require an ostomy bag to be attached to the outside of the body. One to the spine might result in paralysis. A gun shot to the bone could shatter it, requiring much more than a sling to be worn just for a few days.

In her work at Regional Hospital, Becky also noted that it was not uncommon to hear young people who had witnessed gun violence talk about it with little or no affect in their voices or facial expressions. On the other hand, many gun shot victims expressed surprise to hear that it hurt so much to be shot, because they had not seen it portrayed that way on television or in movies.

If the gun shot victim makes it through surgery and the recovery room, the next step is the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Nancy Toy is the Head Nurse at St. Louis University Hospital's 6 ICU, which is for trauma and general surgery patients. She noted that different people respond differently to trauma and that young persons do not always fare better with gun wounds than older people, as is often thought. In addition to ostomies, she pointed out that facial disfigurement is not unusual, nor is amputation, if damage to a limb has been severe enough. Nancy also noted that ICU staff often deal with the family of the shooting victim. The families' responses often focus on revenge and, sadly, there are many repeat gun shot patients in the ICU.

The causes of gun violence are varied. Nancy cited

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Carol Giles's favorite books of late are Mark Doty's *Heaven's Coast* and Paul Monette's *Borrowed Time*.

summer heat, which means more people will be out on the street. She also noted that pay day may play a role, because then people have money to buy alcohol and drugs, which often precipitate violence. Becky Hassler pointed out that shootings were often gang-related and that poverty was also often a fact of life for both the shooting victim and the shooter.



In the face of such a complex interplay of causes, one might wonder what response there could be to such carnage. At St. Louis University Hospital there is the Hospital Response to Community Violence (HRCV). HRCV's first contact with a victim of gun violence and his or her family is with Father Gregory Kirsch, a chaplain with St. Louis University's Pastoral Care Department, who prays with them in the ICU. Not surprisingly, most victims and their families are very receptive to this. A brochure for HRCV notes that it "was established in 1991 by hospital employees to help reduce violence and the recidivism rate in the St. Louis community. . . HRCV provides for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of victims of violence and their families while at St. Louis University Hospital. In addition, the group organizes violence prevention programs for school children at risk for violence. . . It welcomes St. Louis University employees, community agency personnel, community residents, St. Louis University Hospital patients and families as members." Members of HRCV meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 4:30 in the Nursing Conference Room at St. Louis University Hospital. If this is of interest, call 1-800-268-5880 for more information.

Another response to gun violence is Project GUNS (Guns Undermine Neighborhood Safety). It is led by Dave

Gocken, a Career Counselor with the Family Court of St. Louis County. The program is designed to reach juveniles who have come to the attention of the Family Court for gun offenses. That is, the young person may have possessed a gun but did not harm anyone with it. There are two components to the program, a conference with the youth and his or her parents and a three-hour group session.

During the group session there is a Victim Impact Panel, which offers four perspectives on gun violence: a police officer, an emergency room nurse or physician, a gun shot survivor, and the parent of a deceased gun shot victim. Pam Golden is a Trauma Clinical Nurse Specialist at St. Louis University Hospital, and she has presented the emergency room perspective for Project GUNS. She noted that the young people in the program are often less affected by pictures of a dead body than by ones of people injured by gun wounds. Body image is important to many of them, and disfigurement or an ostomy bag have a more powerful impact on them.

A print description about Project GUNS notes that "the group session concludes with a presentation from a community religious leader regarding the sacredness and preciousness of human life," especially the lives of the participants of the program.

Project GUNS has met with some success because of "the 36 youth who have completed the program, only two have re-offended." For questions or more information on Project GUNS contact Dave Gocken at 962-6866, extension 19.

The temptation for many of us who listen to evening news reports of gun violence may be to feel powerless to make a difference to the problem. The two programs described above are proof that efforts are being made to address the problem on a community level. May we not permit such feelings to prevent us from trying to break through the hopelessness that must truly be at the heart of gun violence. +

In addition to the suggestions mentioned in Carol's article, please consider the following:

- ♦ Join the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. Visit their web-site at [www.gunfree.org/csgv](http://www.gunfree.org/csgv).
- ♦ Contact Missourians Against Handgun Violence at (314) 997-5800.

# Gun Nation: Arming the World

by Susan Alan

The decade of the 1990's was supposed to bring us a "peace dividend." The Cold War was over, and the United States no longer needed to be armed to the teeth to defend itself and the rest of the world against "Communist domination." We could afford to substantially decrease Pentagon spending and invest those federal dollars in domestic programs. Further, the Gulf War demonstrated the dangers of extensively arming countries within the same region for dubious foreign policy reasons.

It looked, back in the early 1990's, as though the major arms supplier countries were reconsidering their Cold War strategy of using weapons trading as a foreign policy leveraging tool and toward refocusing their national priorities to better meet domestic needs. Defense spending worldwide during this decade has been declining significantly. This is not, however, the case with the United States. Although our federal defense budget is below Cold War and Reagan era levels, it remains high — \$281 billion proposed for FY 2000, nearly 50% of all discretionary spending. Moreover, the U.S. share of worldwide defense spending is 34 per cent.

And, while overall export of conventional arms worldwide has been decreasing during the past ten years, U.S. arms deliveries have increased. We have the awful distinction of being the principal arms supplier to the world.

The new millennium is near, and we still do not know what a "peace dividend" could have done for us or for the rest of the world. We too often accept, and sometimes demand, huge military expenditures and a free flow of arms worldwide. But have we considered the cost of our acquiescence? The proliferation of conventional arms, and the United States's role in it, needs our attention.

## The United States: Chief Arms Exporter

From 1990 through 1997, \$265.1 billion worth of weapons were transferred around the world, and the U.S. accounted for more than \$117 billion of it. In fact, the U.S. has far outdistanced our closest competition. From 1994 through 1998, the U.S. exported four and a half times as much weaponry in dollar amount as the next major supplier (Russia) and as much as the next sixteen suppliers combined.

The U.S. accounts for approximately 45% of the world's arms market. And, as during the Cold War years, the majority (60-70% in dollar volume) of arms exports go to developing countries. Some of these are non-democratic or repressive governments.

## How We Export Arms

Simply talking about arms sales does not give a clear picture of how weapons are exported from one country to another. "Transfer" is a more comprehensive term. Transfers refer to the sale, lease or gift of military equipment or services (i.e. training and technical assistance). There are five legal ways in which U.S. military equipment and services find their way to another country.

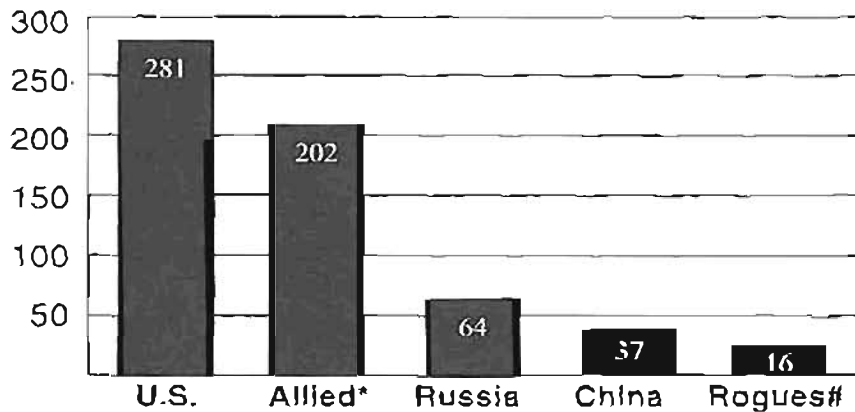
- ◊ **Foreign Military Sales.** FMS are sales of new or used weapons negotiated directly by the Pentagon and usually include related services such as training in operation and maintenance and spare parts. In dollar amount, the bulk of U.S. weapons transfers are FMS.
- ◊ **Direct Commercial Sales.** DCS are sales negotiated by U.S. companies directly with foreign buyers. These sales must be approved by the State Department for

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Susan Alan staffs the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project and makes wonderful lentil soup.

## U.S. Military Spending vs. The World

1998 \$ in Billions



\* "Allies" include the NATO countries, Japan and South Korea

# The "Rogue" states are Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria

Center for Defense Information, volume XXVIII, no. 1 (1999)

export license. During this decade, DCS have been valued at several billion dollars annually. Arms producers increasingly prefer DCS over FMS because direct commercial sales are quicker, cheaper, and entail less oversight.

- ◊ **Leasing by the Pentagon.** The end of the Cold War left us, as well as other major producers, with large quantities of surplus military equipment. In the past few years the Pentagon has been leasing out more and more of it. In 1994, the U.S. leased agreements valued \$300 million; in 1996 they rose to \$700 million.
- ◊ **Excess Defense Articles.** Some of the surplus military stock is given away or sold at deep discount so that the Pentagon doesn't have the cost of storing or destroying it. EDA also make for good foreign policy leveraging articles. Since 1990, the U.S. has offered about \$8 billion worth of such materials to foreign governments, including nearly 4,000 tanks, over 500 bombers and more than 300,000 pistols, rifles, and machine guns. An example of the importance business plays in the weapons trade is that, by law, when the Department of Defense offers EDA, it cannot undercut U.S. companies seeking to sell similar, newly manufactured equipment.
- ◊ **Emergency Drawdowns.** And lastly, the U.S. government can "drawdown" up to \$100 million of military equipment and services to meet "unforeseen emergencies," as in Bosnia. Drawdowns are increasingly becoming a part of international counter-narcotics efforts. Mexico and Columbia have received military helicopters through this program.

### Accurate Information is Hard to Get

As best as can be calculated, the United States

sent or signed agreements during 1998 to send more than \$27 billion worth of weapons and military services to 154 countries. All transfers, actual and proposed, are to be reported to Congress. However, accurate information about legal weapons exports is hard to come by because of the convoluted nature of the transfers and inadequate reporting mechanisms. Neither the Pentagon nor the companies are interested in full disclosure of their sales and agreements.

Were it not for groups like the Federation of American Scientists' Arms Sales Monitoring Project, the Council for a Livable World and its *Arms Trade News* and the Center for Defense Information, among others, the public and Congress would know

very much less than they do.

### The Weapons Give-Away

The problem is not just how much weaponry and military services our government and the arms manufacturers sell, but how much we give away, either outright or through loan and grant programs.

If you are a foreign government in the market for U.S.-made weapons but you don't have the cash to buy—don't worry. The U.S. government has a plethora of programs to provide the weapons you want. A recent study by the Council for a Livable World found that almost half of all U.S. foreign assistance in 1997 was military-related.

U.S. Military aid programs include:

- ◊ **The Foreign Military Financing program, FMF,** provides direct grants and loans for purchases of U.S.-made military articles through FMS or DCS. In 1998 the U.S. appropriated \$3.2 billion for FMFs, the vast majority of which went to Israel (\$1.8 billion) and Egypt (\$1.3 billion), two countries that have benefited most from this program this decade. The new NATO member countries are now being added to the list of FMF recipients.
- ◊ **The Economic Support Fund, ESF,** provides fungible cash transfers which, while not specifically granted for military programs, allow recipient countries to free up their own funds for military purchases. In the case of Israel (\$1.2 billion), ESF grants were made to allow Israel to repay its military debt to the U.S.
- ◊ **While not equipment per se,** grant aid for International Military Education and Training, IMET, belongs in the category of military transfer. In 1998, 123 govern-

# Gun Nation



Zed Nelson lives in London, working through the photographic agency Independent Photographers Group (IPG), London. (E-mail: [ipg@katzpictures.com](mailto:ipg@katzpictures.com)). Nelson's work is published internationally.

"Gun Nation," a disturbing reflection on United States's obsession with the gun, is one of Nelson's most important projects to date. The project, completed over a three-year period, has been published internationally in twelve magazines and newspapers, was screened on British TV and received four major awards. (First prize in the 1998 World Press Photo Competition, awarded the 1998 Visa d'Or for best magazine feature of the year at the International Festival of Photojournalism (France), won the 1999 Alfred Eisenstaedt Award for journalistic impact (USA), and First Prize in the Nikon Press Awards (UK) for Best Photo Essay, 1999).



ments shared \$50 million worth of IMET assistance. One benefit of these programs to the U.S. military-industrial establishment is that potential buyers of U.S. made equipment receive experience with hardware they may later be in the market to buy (perhaps with FMF funds).

Because of revelations concerning the human rights records of some of the IMET recipient countries' regimes, legislation was passed in 1998 that is intended to restrict countries with gross human rights records and better provide for congressional oversight of this program. Recent recipients of IMET with questionable human rights records include Indonesia, Colombia, Turkey, and Mexico. In the case of Indonesia, Congress banned IMET to that country in 1992 because of clear human rights abuses in East Timor. However, the administration got around that prohibition by providing combat training to Indonesian troops through the Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program.

Finally, after the August 1999 referendum in East Timor, President Clinton cut off all arms sales and military ties to Indonesia. While Congress' recent actions to reign in U.S. military ties with unsavory regimes is a hopeful sign, our decades of such support may haunt us in the future.

#### A Boon in Military Transfers: Counter-narcotics

One of the fastest growing military aid programs are those efforts related to international counter-narcotics activities. For these, the U.S. government provides funds for military equipment and training, mostly to Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1998, \$230 million was appropriated. The FY 2000 budget asks for an increase to \$295 million. Most of the funds are used to export small arms and light weaponry and the refurbishment of surveillance aircraft, transport planes, and helicopters.

One of the problems with the weapons trade is that a weapon can be used for purposes not originally intended and by other people than to whom it was first transferred. This is certainly the case with military articles provided for counter-narcotic efforts, as it is with other types of weapons transfers.

The White House drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, and several congressional supporters have asked for approximately \$500 million next year for the Colombian army and police. Colombia is involved in a brutal counter-insurgency war, and there is little distinction between its counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency operations. The Department of Defense is also increasing counter-narcotics aid to Andean states, including a shipment of \$75 million worth of "emergency drawdown" equipment from U.S. stockpiles in both 1998 and 1999.

#### Weapons Exports: Stamped "U.S. Tax Payer Financed"

The foreign weapons trade is a major expense to the American taxpayer. We invest heavily in research and

## The United States' Biggest Defense Firms

(For 1997, in billions of dollars)

| Company                    | Defense Revenues |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Lockheed Martin Corp.      | \$18.5           |
| The Boeing Co.             | \$13.8           |
| Northrop Grumman Corp.     | \$8.3            |
| Raytheon Co.               | \$6.3            |
| TRW Inc.                   | \$3.8            |
| General Dynamics Corp.     | \$3.7            |
| United Technologies Corp.  | \$3.3            |
| Liton Industries Inc.      | \$2.9            |
| Allied Signal Inc.         | \$2.1            |
| Newport News Shipbuilding  | \$1.6            |
| General Electric Co.       | \$1.5            |
| United Defense LP          | \$1.2            |
| Science Applications Intl. | \$1.1            |

Source: Defense News in CQ Outlook

*U.S. Government statistics on the 100 Companies receiving the largest dollar volume of prime defense contract awards is available on the Defense Department's web site.*

development of major weapons systems, much of which is destined for eventual sale in the commercial market. We provide sizable loans and grants to foreign buyers, and we outright give the arms away. Also, our government provides considerable assistance to the arms manufacturers to help them sell their wares. The Department of Defense has a staff of about 6,500 full-time personnel whose job it is to promote and service foreign arms deals, and we pay for overseas "sales" trips by government officials.

One rationale often given for the arms trades is that it adds to the prosperity of our economy and produces jobs. However, more and more commercial arms deals contain offsets, which reduce the economic return to the U.S. economy and often result in the transfer of industry jobs overseas. Offsets are economic incentives required by foreign buyers as conditions for weapons purchase. Off-

sets may be the transfer of production capacity, advanced technology, or unrelated economic assistance to the importing country. A Commerce Department study estimated that between 1993 and 1996, US companies agreed to offset agreements valued at \$15.1 billion on contracts valued at \$29.1 billion. While offsets are not a government sponsored program, they may be included in exports financed through the Foreign Military Financing program. The government has done little to this point to hinder them.

### **The Trend Toward Selling More Advanced Weapons Overseas**

Because of the "downturn" worldwide in the domestic arms market, there is an excess arms industry capacity. To take up the slack and keep their Cold War-era production lines open, manufacturers are more aggressively seeking foreign buyers and offering top-of-the-line weapons systems for sale. Recent activities of the Boeing Corporation to sell its F-15E Strike Eagle fighter-bombers to Greece, Turkey, and Israel illustrate this point.

Excess manufacturing capacity added to the large post-Cold War surpluses of the producing countries have made the arms trade a buyers' market. One result is that not only is the most sophisticated U.S.-made weaponry being sold overseas, but highly advanced technology has been put on the trading block. As part of a proposed \$8 billion sale of 80 Lockheed-Martin F-16 fighter jets, the United Arab Emirates have requested the classified computer "source codes" that control the jet's basic systems. These source codes enable the recipient to reprogram and improve the plane's electronic systems and radar, increasing its targeting capability. Previously, the U.S. only sold source codes to our closest European allies.

If the U.S. allows this technology transfer to the U.A.E., it will be harder to deny Turkey and Israel, both of which have asked for source codes, in pending arms deals.

### **A Rifle Is As Dangerous As A Jet Fighter**

While major weapons systems such as fighter aircraft and tanks account for the largest dollar amount of weapon transfers worldwide, the proliferation of "small arms" is responsible for many more deaths. These are the weapons of choice in low-intensity conflicts — the civil and regional wars which have claimed over one million lives this decade. Add to this the number of people who have been killed or wounded as a result of criminal activity and terrorism, and the problem of small arms proliferation is staggering.

In a United Nation speech on Africa in 1998, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the arms exporting nations bear some responsibility for a trade which "fuels conflict, fortifies extremism and destabilizes entire regions" in Africa and worldwide. While the presence of these weapons cannot be said to cause conflicts, their easy availability certainly contributes to the violent

resolution of differences.

From 1996 through 1998, the U.S. delivered or licensed for sale weapons of some type to twenty-one countries that were involved in a major armed conflict during the same time period. They were: Angola, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Israel, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Uganda, and the United Kingdom. In the case of Ethiopia/Eritrea and India/Pakistan, we have armed both sides.

### **Small Arms in Big Numbers**

Seventy countries produce small arms and munitions. An August 1999 United Nation report estimated that there are 500 million such small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide. As well as the prolific trade in military style weapons, there are hundreds of millions of small arms designed for police and civilian use.

"Small arms" refers to any weapon that can be carried and used by one or two people—from handguns to assault rifles, automatic pistols to light machine guns, grenade launchers to shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. These weapons are relatively cheap and are easy to conceal and transport.

### **A Costly Free Flow**

It is particularly difficult to track the export of small arms and light weapons from the U.S. because most of these proposed transfers fall below the \$14 million threshold for congressional notification. Also, the State Department is required to report export authorizations, but not actual deliveries. Further, these weapons are often manufactured and transferred covertly. Still, it is clear that the United States is a major supplier to the world.

### **The Private Market**

Legal transfers of a small arms occur in the same ways as larger weapons systems. The majority are exported through direct commercial sales. In FY 1998, the State Department authorized the export of approximately \$478 million worth of small arms, light weapons, ammunition, and spare parts or manufacturing equipment. This is up slightly from fiscal year 1997. These exports included over 440,000 pistols, rifles, shotguns, submachine guns and machine guns, as well as over 650 million ammunition cartridges. Among the top recipients of small arms licenses in 1998 were Taiwan (\$46.5 million) and Venezuela (\$39 million). Major small arms recipients also included countries with internal conflicts, such as Israel and Indonesia. Brazil and South Africa, which, like the U.S., have high gun-related murder rates, were also high on the list of importers. While the dollar numbers for small arms may seem low as compared to the tens of billions of dollars in total arms transfers, because a gun may be valued at \$100-300,

these amounts represent a large quantity of weapons.

### The Government Garage Sale

Since the end of the Cold War, large quantities of surplus light weaponry have been sold or given away by the U.S., former Soviet countries, Germany (which inherited the military of the German Democratic Republic), the Netherlands, and eastern European countries. In the past few years, over 300,000 rifles, pistols, machine guns and grenade launchers have been offered up through the U.S. surplus route.

The U.S. government prohibits the retransfer of exported weapons without prior permission. However, neither the State Department nor the Pentagon have had reliable end-use monitoring programs. Under pressure from Congress, controls are being tightened. Still, U.S. firearms have been illegally sent to conflicts in Rwanda, Algeria, Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. Many of these are retransferred from European Union countries. In fact, all firearm licenses to the United Kingdom have been revoked because of retransfer violations and because the UK prohibits internal sale of handguns, so any export to them would have to be for retransfer.

### Our Government's Secret Deliveries

A vast supply of small arms were delivered covertly by both the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War to various foreign governments and "freedom fighters." We will never know how many weapons ended up in places such as Afghanistan, Angola and Central America, or where they are now. Undoubtedly many of the Cold War's covert weapons have moved from one hot spot to another.

### The Black Market

Many of the small arms originally manufactured and sold under legal means find their way on to both the domestic and international black markets. Some experts estimate that smuggling accounts for as much as half of all light weapons transfers. According to the Clinton Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms received approximately 30,000 requests in 1996 from Organization of American States member countries to trace weapons used in crimes in their countries. Other sources for the black market include the U.S. domestic gun market and thefts from the arsenals of military and security forces.

### Stemming Small Arms Proliferation

The good news is that both internationally and within the United States in the past several years, more attention is being paid to the proliferation of small arms and light weaponry. Secretary of State Albright has proposed establishing "responsible arms transfers that are

effective worldwide" and an "international center to collect and share information on arms transfers." While these measures have not yet been acted upon, the political will to do so is growing.

In November 1997, the United States and 27 other governments from our hemisphere signed the "Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Restricted Material." The convention, which was negotiated through the Organization of American States, requires states to strengthen border controls, mark firearms and share information on weapons producers, dealers, importers and exporters. While the U.S. has taken several steps to bring our export policy into compliance with treaty regulations, the Senate has not yet ratified the treaty.

### Reigning in The Trade in Arms

Several of the countries currently receiving U.S.-made weapons and military services are engaged in conflict or have extremely poor human rights records. The first step our government should take is to place tighter restrictions on U.S. arms transfers. This could be accomplished through passage and enforcement of a strong Code of Conduct for Arms Transfers, which would establish human rights, democracy, and non-aggression criteria on exports eligibility. Several legislative versions of a Code have been in the congressional works for the past few years.

Some experts have estimated that almost half of all foreign weapons trade is financed with tax dollars, not the foreign arms buyers themselves. We have a right to know exactly what is being exported, to whom, and whether or not it stays where it is sent. Arms control groups have offered specific and sane recommendations for improving current practices; they should be heeded.

Thus far, most governmental attention is being paid to curbing the illicit trade; however, much of the illegal trade is fueled by legal arms transfers. Supplier countries should take steps to end the indiscriminate use and curb the oversupply of these weapons, including their own domestic gun markets. Further, the U.S. could encourage arms collection and destruction programs, like the "Goods for Guns" program in El Salvador, through financial aid from the U.S. Agency for International Development. That's foreign aid we can be proud of.

We can demand of the Congress that they take the following actions: pass a strong Code of Conduct for Arms Transfers; take concrete measures to improve transparency of arms sales, including small arms; reduce U.S. subsidies for foreign arms transfers; ratify the OAS Convention on Small Arms; prohibit offsets on exports financed in whole or in part by U.S. military aid; repay taxpayers for public funds expended to research and develop weapons which are then exported and financially benefit only the manufacturers.

As a society, we in the United States pour enormous resources into the making, selling and using of arms. The magnitude of this trade results in profound harm on

the local, national and international level). It creates injustices, such as the underfunding of the human needs of our citizens, the economic and social costs of military spending incurred by developing countries, the exacerbation of civil and regional wars, and the perpetuation of our own violence-dependent culture.

This is not all a problem of the manufacturers looking after their shareholders, and the Pentagon looking out for their suppliers, and the Congress looking for jobs and votes in their districts, and the President looking to appear strong and victorious, and Turkey looking to be "mightier" than Greece, and the Colombian government looking to wipe out any dissent.

It is also a problem at which most of us are not looking closely enough. And, when we do ask, both our government and the arms industry make it difficult to get at the full truth. The lobby for the arms trade is entrenched and powerful. If we want a peace dividend for our own people to come from our position as the only superpower, and if we want our government to use that position of

strength as a peacemaking force throughout the world instead of as the principal arms salesman, then we will have to demand it from our elected officials.

The flow of arms worldwide is given legitimacy by the U.S. government's role in it and is largely paid for by our tax dollars. We have a responsibility to slow the proliferation of conventional arms. ✦

*Most of the research for this article came from publications of the Federation of American Scientists' "Arms Sales Monitor," the Council for a Livable World and its "Arms Trade News," the Center for Defense Information and the Arms Trade Resource Center of the World Policy Institute. For a more thorough look at the issues raised here and more, read, The Arms Trade Revealed: A Guide for Investigators and Activists, from the Federation of American Scientists. The book can be gotten through the office of the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project, 438 N. Skinker, St. Louis, MO 63130, 314-726-6406.*

## Colombia Update

by Cecilia Zarate-Laun

This autumn the American Friends Service Committee, along with several other organizations, sponsored Cecilia Zarate-Laun's visit to Saint Louis, where she spoke at Webster University. Mira Tanna conducted the following interview with her for the environmental and social justice publication, *Three River Confluence*. Anyone interested in more information on that publication may call Mark Quercus at 773-2842.

MT: Tell me about how you got involved in Colombian solidarity work.

CZL: The issue that kicked off my activity was the assassination of a professor of mine at the University of Colombia. He was a professor of public health and president of a committee for human rights in Medellín. He was coming out of a funeral home, where he had gone to pay his respects to a labor leader who was assassinated that morning, and he was killed right outside the funeral home. At

the time there was a list circulating of people to be killed. Several people that I knew and respected were on that list. I grew up in Colombia, in a family that valued education and political involvement.

MT: Colombia is requesting \$3.5 billion in aid from the U.S., and Colombia already gets more U.S. aid than any other country in the hemisphere. What has U.S. aid gone for in the past, and how do you think this aid might be used?

CZL: Most of the aid in the past has been used for the military. Apparently, President Pastrana is asking for aid for other issues, because it's clear that the real cause of the problems are due to the structure of the country, that it's an exclusionary society. But I'm afraid that most of the aid will be used for the army, for military hardware, that in no way addresses the real issues that need to change in Colombian society.

MT: So you don't support the aid package?

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Cecilia Zarate-Laun is a co-founder and program director of the Colombia Support Network in Madison, WS.

**CZL:** If it goes through the U.N. or some agency which assists the Colombian poor, it would be okay, but I'm afraid that the bulk of the aid is for the military. Any aid that goes to the government must be monitored because of the corruption of the elite.

**MT:** The thing we hear most often about Colombia is about the drug war. Has the Colombian military been effective at curbing the flow of drugs from Latin America?

**CZL:** No, it hasn't affected the flow of drugs. The war in Colombia has been going on for more than 50 years. The majority of the people are excluded from social, political, and economic rights. That generated a rebellion and civil war. So the civil war preceded the drug issue. The drug issue came in the 70's and exacerbated the situation. Also, we should never forget that the military is closely allied with the paramilitaries, which are heavily involved in narco-trafficking themselves. So we question that aid going to the military—is the aid going to the narco-traffickers themselves?

**MT:** What is the U.S.'s main interest in Colombia? Is it really to curb the flow of drugs?

**CZL:** There are two main interests. The main reason for U.S. involvement is because this civil war certainly stops plans for globalization. Colombia has a strategic location as a country with access to both oceans. But the guerrillas are a stone in the shoe of globalization. The other reason is Colombia's wealth. It is a very rich country with many natural resources — minerals, etc. And the guerrillas are against globalization.

**MT:** There have been rumors in the papers about a U.S. invasion of Colombia. A recent cover of a magazine in Colombia read: "Never has there been so much talk about a United States military intervention in Colombia." How much of a possibility do you think it is?

**CZL:** You can never know, because if the U.S. wants to invade, it has the ability. Because Colombia is so close to the U.S. (both politically and geographically) and the U.S. does not garner any sympathy from most of Latin America, I think politically it would be a mistake to invade. Instead, the U.S. is feeding the Colombian military machine. If this doesn't bring an end to the civil war, they might invade. There is a political price, because neither people in the U.S. or in Latin America will want a bloody civil war on this continent.

**MT:** What has been the cost of the civil war?

**CZL:** It's difficult to say, but more than 30,000 have died in the last ten years. And I'm not talking about people killed by the mafia. I'm talking about grassroots leaders: journalists, peasant leaders, human rights workers, women leaders, priests, nuns, university professors, teachers. About 30,000 of these people have been killed for political reasons.

**MT:** Colombia has been carrying on a 40-year war against rebels. What are the rebels fighting for, and how much support do they have from the public?

**CZL:** There are two groups: the FARC and the ELN. The FARC is for land reform and reforms in the structure of society. The ELN supports these goals but concentrates

on not giving resources to multinational corporations. They do not have wide support from the population because they are ruthless and fight with violent means and kidnap people. They have alienated the middle and upper classes. Many support their goals but reject their tactics. They don't have wide support like the Sandinistas or the Cubans did. They have lost the moral ground because they have committed atrocities. Personally, I'm afraid of them because they are very violent. This is why we support the civil society in the middle. The grassroots have the right to exist in the middle of these warring factions.

**MT:** When Pastrana came to power, he vowed to end the civil war. Do you think he will be able to make good on his promise, and, if so, how does he intend to carry this out?

**CZL:** To end the conflict in Colombia, very deep structural changes are needed. Pastrana has a lot of courage and has tried to end the war, but in my opinion he is too influenced by the U.S. To end the war, the participation of the whole society is needed, and I don't know if he will be able to carry it out. This war is caused by social, political and economic problems and can't be solved with military solutions.

**MT:** Is there anything you would like to add?

**CZL:** There are also a lot of environmental issues in Colombia. The peasants are cutting part of the rainforest to grow coca, which is the only alternative for them. They fumigate and destroy the rain forest. In the Chucó, roads are being built to facilitate trade in the Americas. And it's very dangerous.

**MT:** What can people in the U.S. do to support civil society in Colombia?

**CZL:** They can join the Colombia Support Network. We are trying to create a grassroots movement in the U.S. made by civil society in this country giving a hand to civil society in Colombia. We partner chapters in the U.S. with sister communities in Colombia under the stress of war, and establish relationships between U.S. citizens and Colombians working for peace and justice and whose lives are often threatened. That's why it is important for people to join CSN.



If you are interested in getting involved in local support efforts for Colombia, please contact Mira Tanna at American Friends Service Committee, 314-862-5773, [mvtanna@artsci.wustl.edu](mailto:mvtanna@artsci.wustl.edu). For more information on CSN, call 608-257-8753, or see [www.igc.org/csn](http://www.igc.org/csn).

# From Abroad

by Dean Brackley, S.J.



*The following is an edited excerpt from Dean's talk, "Higher Standards for Higher Education: The Christian University and Solidarity," given at the second Mey Puleo Conference at Saint Louis University on October 5, 1999. That conference was a commemoration devoted to the 10th anniversary of the El Salvadoran Jesuit martyrs and their co-workers who were based at the Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador.*

The signs of the times invite us to open a new chapter in Jesuit-sponsored higher education in the U.S. What are the signs of our times? There is bad news and good news.

At the turn of the millennium, we find it very hard to say where the world is headed--whether economically, politically, socially, culturally, or intellectually. But one thing is certain: We are finishing up this century in very bad shape. The U.N.'s 1999 *Human Development Report* informs us that "[t]he income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960." Inequality is increasing everywhere, including the U.S. and Europe. Globally, more than twice as many women are poor as men, and the division of rich and poor is perhaps the greatest cause of environmental destruction. With the growing resource gap, U.N. documents speak of spreading crime and violence with traffic in drugs and weapons, in women and girls for sex, and, in general, of social disintegration. I witnessed that disintegration in spades during the 80's in the South Bronx: the crumbling of communities, families and egos. Since then we have been witnessing a kind of globalization of the South Bronx and that threefold crumbling.

Not all the news is bad. There are signs of hope. Where? Governments? Politicians? Traditional politics, the politics of governments and parties, left, right and center, are suffering a global legitimization crisis. We don't believe they can eliminate poverty, save the environment, stop the violence or advance the cause of human rights.

Well, if they can't, who can? Who is advancing

the cause of humanity? When I ask people these questions, they answer: Amnesty International, the United Nations, environmental groups, women's groups, community groups. They mention non-governmental organizations, NGOs. It was a coalition of more than 1,300 NGOs who spearheaded the spectacular success of the Land Mine Treaty and won the Nobel Peace Prize three years ago. These groups of ordinary citizens carried off one of the most successful humanitarian campaigns in history. Signs of the times.

In Central America, people expect little from macro-politics these days. Most of the ferment, and the locus of hope, is in civil society. Like other poor regions, Central America is witness to the steady growth of *la sociedad civil*: groups of neighbors, indigenous and black people, environmental groups, unions, small and medium-sized businesses, cooperatives, communal banks and consumers who are pushing for change from the bottom up and across the base of society. Within what have been traditional authoritarian societies, these movements increasingly stress democratic participation, transparency and accountability in their own internal organization.

These groups hold great promise; and yet, they remain weak. In countries like El Salvador, the micro-initiatives run up against macro-obstacles. When I worked out in rural Jayaque, the people of one community stopped the destruction of a local river by blocking work with their own bodies. This is very dangerous business in El Salvador and places like it. If you directly challenge companies who are polluting the Acelhuate River in San Salvador, you could be found floating face down in the Acelhuate tomorrow morning. This means that environmental activists need to link up with Greenpeace. The human rights office at the UCA is working hard to end impunity of prominent public figures involved in organized crime and even murder. The director of the human rights office is no fool. He makes good friends with human rights groups in Washington and San José, Costa Rica. Cooperatives learn about Grameen banks. They link up locally and internationally. So, too, with women, indigenous peoples and

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Dean Brackley, S.J. teaches theology and ethics at the UCA. He is currently completing a book on Ignatian spirituality and solidarity.

unions. Poor local communities link up with sister parishes and sister communities in Europe and North America. Without international allies, the fledgling groups of civil society have no chance against those who control the market and the means of violence.

That seems to be the pattern as we move into the next century. Apart from the number 2000, which is a round figure only by human convention, the signs of the times suggest that we are indeed at the end of an era. On the one hand, we are experiencing a global crisis of our major institutions and spreading social disintegration—witness the recent horrific shooting sprees in Littleton, Atlanta, Los Angeles and Fort Worth—and, on the other hand, the growth of non-governmental groups and movements which are fighting the social disintegration and slowly forging a new world. While fire rages among the tall pines, new shoots are springing up on the forest floor. But, again, the local micro-initiatives in poor and violent countries face macro-obstacles and need international allies to survive.

This situation leads me to suggest that we will

have to make this new century the Century of International Solidarity. The powerful of the world are extending their power through globalized markets and communications. The response from those who hope to advance the cause of humanity can only be to globalize solidarity, that is, to globalize the practice of love. It is not clear at this point just how to organize more humane societies in this new century or how to get from here to there. But one thing is certain. There will be no new societies unless we have new human beings capable of identifying with the cause of the world's majorities. In the Ignatian spirit of *tantum quantum* rather than the consumer spirit, we will need to take advantage of the new technology—internet, e-mail and discount air fares--and make them channels of love and service instead of their opposites. If the micro-initiatives of the poor South are not to be crushed by the macro-obstacles they face, that will depend, decisively, I think, on a critical mass of people in the rich North who will unite with them and assume their cause as their own, and, indeed, as the cause of humanity.



# From Karen House

by Annjie Schiefelbein



Hope can be a precarious companion. Fortunately, resilience is also in her nature. Recently, I had the opportunity to experience both sides.

I reported for jury duty last Monday. I was thinking there was no way they would let me on the jury if they knew even an inkling of the truth about me. I was not expecting to be selected, being Catholic Worker-minded and all. Imagine my surprise when they didn't ask me anything during the selection process and then picked me. Juror number 9, for a first-degree murder case.

It went pretty well for the first two days. I was so certain that the three defendants were innocent from the beginning that I was just hoping that their three lawyers would do a good job convincing the other jurors so that I wouldn't have to. Day three brought fear to me. What would I do if, in fact, at the end of the trial I believed one or all of the defendants were guilty? That began it, a wind-fall of questions, depression, and sleeplessness that went on beyond the end of the trial. I thought about the judicial system. I thought about the responsibility involved with

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Annjie Schiefelbein reads Gabriel García Marquez and listens to Moxie Frévous in what little spare time she has.

deciding the guilt or innocence of another. I thought about the fact that the jury was mostly white and female. I thought about the prison system and rehabilitation. I tried to come up with biblical examples to lead me. Mostly I wondered how I could punish someone for falling off the mountain that my society pushed them off of in the first place. It is nearly impossible to be young, black, and poor in this country and not grow up with violence as one of the only means of strength and self-actualization. We somehow set it up that way. Can I punish someone by playing by the rules? Directly after that came thoughts of accountability. Can I



not punish someone for having so little regard for life? After I left the courtroom each night I could only see the faces of the three accused. What had their lives shown them? I longed for a chance to talk to them, wondering if I could see guilt or innocence or remorse or fear in their eyes. I longed to know their stories, not just the tiny fraction of them allowed in the courtroom. I watched them day after day, trying to see them, any part of them that wasn't being shown to me. I watched the lawyers, and had many of the same thoughts about them. What did they see when they looked at their clients?

In the end, it didn't matter. Because of some random direction that we the jury didn't know we were not following, a mistrial was declared. Everyone, the judge told us, was disappointed in our performance as a jury. Did he know that after the incredible amount of emotional and intellectual energy and many sleepless nights that we, too, were disappointed? He didn't mention it, if he did know. Many of the jurors were in tears. I was angry. The "ignored direction" seemed so arbitrary and small next to the lives of the three men who go back to jail and wait for another trial. Leaving the courthouse I got a chance to talk to the three defense lawyers and state prosecutor. We rehashed and processed things. It was helpful for me to a

point. My anger at the lack of resolve shifted. I heard things from the lawyers that had not made it into the courtroom; vital things that were part of the bigger story for which I had yearned during the trial but, for some legal reason, were not permissible in court. I heard one of the lawyers brag about his "strategies" in the courtroom. A strategy to me that seemed like a consistent stream of false emotion and blatant lies. Their opinions didn't match their courtroom performances. I was more than disheartened by it. I walked home from the courthouse disgusted, realizing that truth had little part of our current perverted system of justice. The depression that had a hold of me throughout the trial did not lift when the trial ended. My sense of hope was, for the moment, gone.

I live in an amazing community with people who are as full of integrity as they are playfulness. I live in a house with many children who almost always greet me as if they have not seen me in a year (even if it has only been an hour). When I say to the people with whom I live, "I'm not certain if it is moral to convict someone even if I feel they are guilty," they understand where I'm coming from. This group of people, Becky, Celeste, Courtney, Jenny, Teka, and Tim, took care of me everyday in their own ways. When I finally broke down a bit the night before deliberation began, Becky let me talk non-stop for hours on her couch. Celeste asked everyday, without fail, how it was going and gave me the exact look I needed—the look of sorrow and remorse that only mothers know how to do properly. Courtney hugged me and hugged me and said, "Oh, Anujie SchiefelBOO" because she knows it always gets a smile out of me. Jenny e-mailed me faithfully from Chicago during the week to give support and babied me every weekend. Teka encouraged me to stay with the hard questions and keep being bothered by the troubling things. She prayed for me faithfully and let me beat her in a wrestling match to vent my frustrations. Tim told me bad jokes and talked to me about ordinary things to pull me out of my own thing. Our guest Francine told me very lovingly to get over it, and another guest, Hela, gave me a hug to send me off to court every morning. The kids, unfazed, just made me play. Mostly, everyone was just here, and let me be how I needed to be.

My hope is coming back again. I knew it wouldn't stay gone for long. It is hard to be here and without hope. It's a funny paradox, living here brings me to more hopeless and desperate situations than I ever could have imagined. It also brings me more light than I thought the world had. I have no answers to the many questions that jury duty brought my way; but, at the same time, I am grateful. Hope must be present in a world that brought me to a place such as this, with a love this great and a group of people with whom I can share so much. ✦

# From Little House



by Mary Ann McGivern, SL

Hazel Tullock died on Sunday, October 3rd, 1999. She was one of the early guests at Karen House, arriving the first time in the fall of 1977, an alcoholic with no resources and a small child, in tow. That winter the state took custody of the child and Hazel took to living on the street.

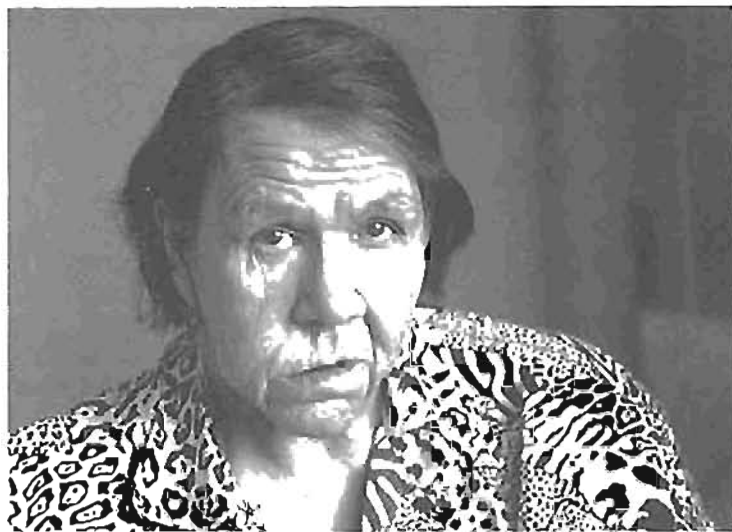
She came back to Karen House again and again over the next decade, but she never liked staying there. The quarters were too close, the children too demanding, the rules too confining. We let her sleep in the back yard in summer, on the front room couch in bitter cold. She stayed with us for a month or so in 1981 when her leg was broken. But mostly we drove her to detox, gave her a hot meal, or stood at the door, telling her no, she couldn't come into the house drunk.

Hazel's body was battered. Her feet were twisted and misshapen because, she told us, a pimp had stomped on them once and broken them. She served time for shoplifting and while in jail had a stroke that went untreated. Her right arm hung uselessly until one icy night, about a year after her release from jail, she fell down a flight of stairs and dislocated the shoulder. The dislocation too went untreated by local hospitals and the arm became palsied. She was now in constant pain and unable to dress herself or keep her balance, so she lived the last ten years of her life in a nursing home in enforced sobriety.

Hazel changed many of us who knew her. The week she was dying, John Kavanaugh said she had been wily enough to choose good friends who would love her and stand by her. And that's true. She was wily. And she was grateful to us for our kindness. In return, she gave us honesty.

She never was awestruck by the mystique of the Catholic Worker. She saw our feet of clay and pointed them out to us: that we were too busy to live out our ideals of personalism; that we were greedy with our time; that we didn't listen; that we used the rules as a crutch; that we lacked compassion.

It's difficult sometimes to be a Catholic Worker because other people are so admiring (and perhaps later so disillusioned) that communication is blocked. Not Hazel. All her life she rejected people first, and it took her by surprise that despite or because of our feet of clay, we continued to let her in the door. She liked our stubborn



determination to be good, despite the odds. We grew on each other, becoming not so much friends as family who count on the other to be there.

Teka particularly was faithful, sending her money and letters and visiting her in jail and then visiting her every Sunday at the various nursing homes. When Hazel got out of jail, I became her Social Security payee; I signed the paperwork, got her an apartment, and took responsibility when she finally couldn't take care of herself, but I wasn't nearly as reliable a visitor as Teka. Sometimes Hazel would call and ask me to come take her out for a ride. At times, I did drop everything to go see her when she asked, but more often I'd put her off with promises. She accepted me the same way she accepted whatever life chose to give her, without much sense that she deserved better. She wasn't happy; but she said not to worry, that she didn't know what would make her happy.

I told her her liver was failing. She said, "Am I dying?" and I said yes. She nodded and said she'd like to get out of the hospital and back to the nursing home; but the doctor hoped he could engineer a modest remission with medicines (he was fond of her, too), and then she took a turn for the worse. I was with her when she died. I thought I was awake. I was holding her hand. And then I realized her hand was cold. Hazel's death was so peaceful, surely she found there what would make her happy.

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Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., was one of the thousands of people who "crossed the line" at the School of the Americas protest at Fort Benning, Georgia on November 21, 1999.

by Mark Scheu

I've long had a fascination with weather. I monitor weather reports almost obsessively. I have a weather radio, and even though I invariably had already kept abreast of the weather through other media, I would still tune in periodically. Different voices announced the forecasts, some pleasant, some strongly accented, some quite halting in their pronunciation. This made the reports all the more personal and distinctive. But lately they have been spoken in a deep, ponderous, awkward voice with no variation in tone or rhythm. At first I wondered who this odd character might be who had come to monopolize all the broadcasts. Then it dawned upon me that it was a computer-generated voice!

How ironic. Something as natural, uncontrollable, and defiantly unpredictable as the weather being announced by an artificial voice, generated by a machine. It represented but one more symptom of the separation of ourselves from the natural forces and substance of life.

I used to think I had a strong, unusual affinity for nature, for the outdoors. But no longer do I believe it to be an affinity, unshared by others, so much as a longing for contact with and immersion in the natural world, as opposed to the plastic, fabricated world in which we encapsulate ourselves. It is a universal human characteristic. Some would trace it to our evolution as creatures that came from the wild; others will contend that it is the way we were intended by God, as part of the scheme of creation, not separate from it. It is commonly evident in the extent to which our recreation focuses on spending time out-of-doors.

For myself, it explains my fascination with the weather, the raw elements we shelter ourselves from in our homes, our workplaces, our vehicles. It is one reason I choose to commute to work, as standing at the bus stop or walking across campus from the Metro station increases my exposure to the elements. It accounts for my habit of

spending so much of my free time wandering about the woods of the Missouri St. Francois mountains. This affinity for the natural world is also manifest in my aversion toward airports. Inside an airport, we are entirely cut off from any naturally occurring substance. We are surrounded with manufactured products. The smell of plastic, of textile, of chemicals predominates. Everything is an artifact, nothing is natural.

Yet our opportunities to escape from this artificial to a more natural world are rapidly eroding. This happens in the name of many causes: affluence, efficiency, comfort, convenience, safety, and so forth. The more we cut ourselves off from the natural world, the more ill-at-ease, or diseased, we become. And we then strain to create ways to reestablish contact with the earth, the woods, the beaches, the mountains and glades. We purchase mammoth vehicles to transport us safely to distant places out of a desire to recapture, however briefly, some elusive sense of belonging to creation. And in so doing, of course, we wreak havoc in innumerable ways on the very earth we seek contact with. Surely it would be more sensible to abandon our headlong drive toward progress and development and settle for an intermediate form of technology, such as advocated a generation ago by E.F. Schumacher.

Two of the principles of the Catholic Worker movement are simple living and back to the land. Dorothy and Peter's instincts have long since been validated by our growing alienation from the natural world, and, hence, from our true selves. All religions reverberate with the wisdom of knowing humanity's place in creation and the folly of setting ourselves apart from or above it. To be a Christian today, to be a spiritually based individual, to know God, is to care for creation and to work to restore our place in it.



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Mark Scheu knows all kinds of weather from his year-round jogging through Forest Park.

Dear Friends,

We have some special needs.

The house could use a truck or van for furniture pick-ups and moving.

We need more housetakers. During a five hour shift, housetakers attend to our guests and neighbors, answer the phone and door, etc.

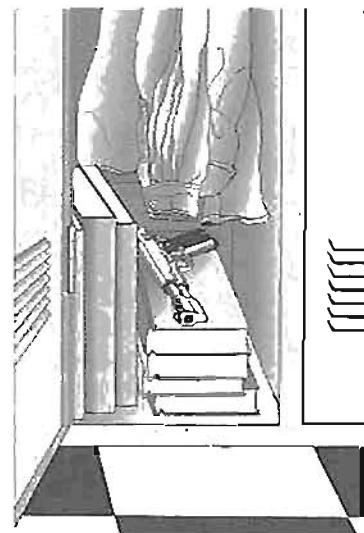
We need cooks. Cooks prepare meals.

Thanks for anything you can do and all you have done.

*The Catholic Worker Community*

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We are still seeking original art work for *The Round Table*. If you are interested, contact Teka Childress at 621-4052. We are grateful to Mark Weber, Evann Richards and their students at SLCC Forest Park for their contributions to this issue.



Gary Phillips

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